Maine History

Volume 36
Number 3 *Issues 3-4; Civil Rights in Maine, 1945-1971*

Article 3

1-1-1997

Resistance In “Pioneer Territory”: The Maine NAACP and the Pursuit of Fair Housing Legislation

Eben Simmons-Miller

EBEN SIMMONS MILLER

RESISTANCE IN "PIONEER TERRITORY": THE MAINE NAACP AND THE PURSUIT OF FAIR HOUSING LEGISLATION

While Charles Lumpkins details the organizational strategies of the civil-rights movement in Maine, Eben Miller focuses on the politics of fair housing. Outlining the "geography of segregation" in Maine, he describes the resistance to fair housing, and the means by which the NAACP documented civil-rights violations, drafted legislation, built coalitions of concerned black and white citizens, and advanced the "moral and ethical responsibility" of all Mainers to work for fair housing legislation. Mr. Miller, from Woolwich, graduated from Bates College in 1996. His article is based on research done for an honors thesis. Mr. Miller shared some of this material during a February 1996 University of Southern Maine symposium on "Recent Scholarship on African-American History in Maine."

Observing its second annual charter night early in 1966, the Bangor Area Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) invited Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the national NAACP, to speak. It was his first visit to the state of Maine, he remarked, but even so, he was aware that "Vacationland" was "not perfect." Telling the audience of about two hundred that housing and employment discrimination were the most pressing problems facing African-

Among the NAACP's triumphs was the mobilization of black and white citizens around the issue of fair housing, Maine's most pressing civil-rights issue in the mid-1960s. *Portland Branch NAACP. Twenty Years: Portland Branch NAACP (1985).*

American Mainers, Wilkins also commented that nearby Dow Air Force Base had closed, in part, because blacks stationed in the area could not find adequate housing facilities. Though Wilkins's words were hardly a revelation to most in attendance (branch leaders had, in fact, briefed Wilkins on the "situation") the encouragement of a national civil-rights leader, lauding what he considered to be African-American resistance in "pioneer territory," must have given Maine's activists a surge of pride.[1] Discrimination, especially in rental housing, was acknowledged by African Americans as the worst problem with living in Maine.

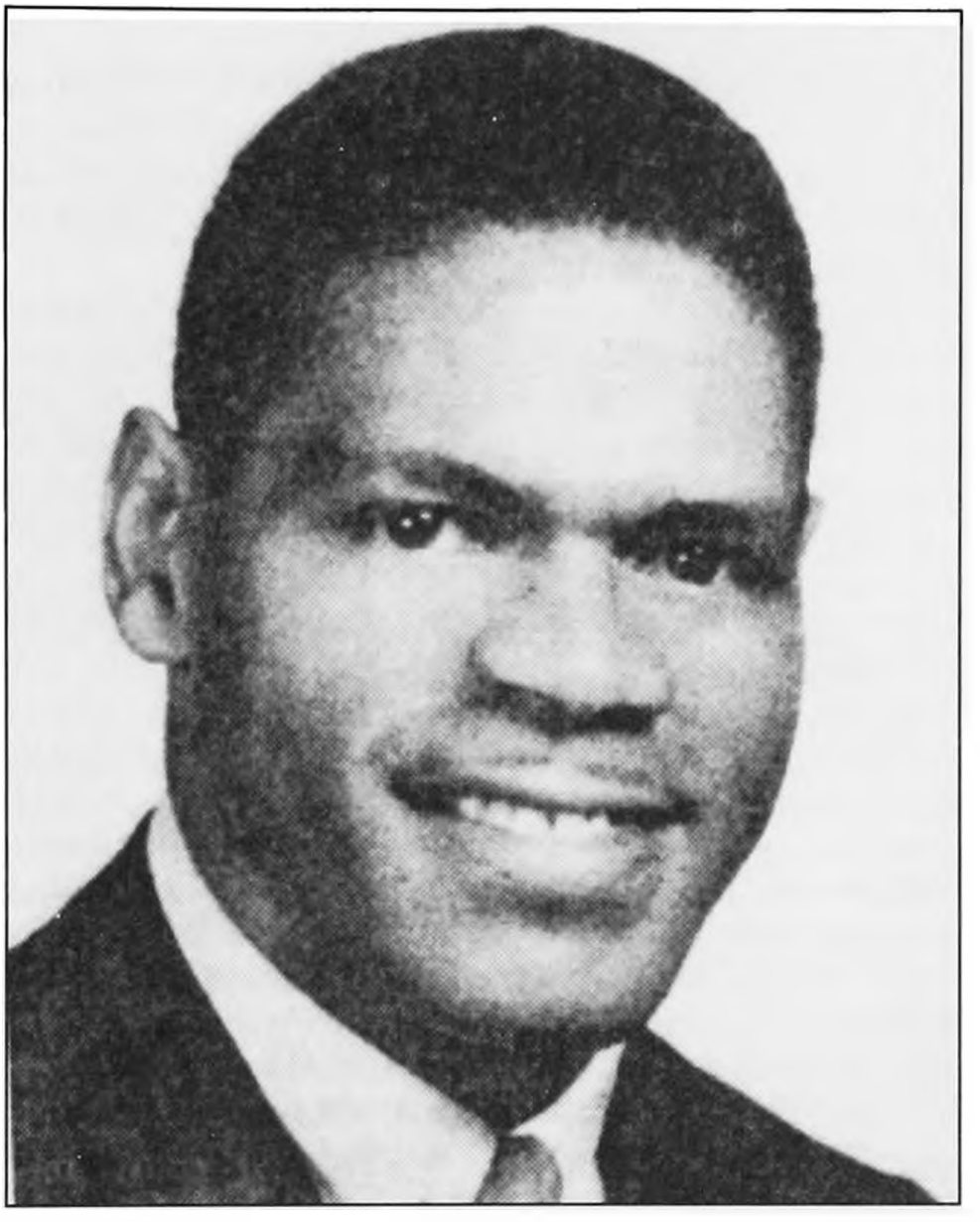
Black Mainers looking for apartments were regularly turned away on sight because of discrimination. African-American Mainers using real estate agencies could also expect discrimination, as many agents obeyed an unwritten code prohibiting the selling of homes in suburban or affluent areas to blacks.

Some African Americans, like Gerald Talbot, "couldn't take [discrimination] on a personal level" and challenged these oppressions with civil-rights activism. During the early 1960s this challenge was organized through the Maine NAACP. Chapters in Lewiston, Brunswick, and Bangor, which led the efforts to pass a housing bill during the 1963 legislative session, were joined in 1964 by a branch in Portland. Boosted by the momentum of the national civil-rights movement, Maine's activists succeeded in gaining fair housing legislation during the 102nd Legislature in 1965.[2]

With the influx of African Americans to the new military bases in Bangor and Brunswick and the naval shipyards in Bath, Portland, and Kittery, housing discrimination became an increasingly visible problem. African Americans stationed at the Dow Air Force Base in Bangor or at the Brunswick Naval Air Station had particular difficulties finding apartments to rent. Sterling Dymond remembered that in Bangor "a lot of GIs' families...went for their own housing [as opposed to base housing]. They had some very poor housing – apartment houses – very poor. But a lot of times they couldn't even get the poor ones."[3]

Discrimination in housing was the most recognized form of oppression faced by Maine's African Americans. Black Mainers could find housing only in neighborhoods specified by a tradition of segregation. White activist Willard Callender, Jr., remembered "a definite geography to where blacks lived in Portland" in the 1950s and 1960s. Donald Fisher recalled a similar geography of segregation in the 1930s and 1940s:

> The street I lived on [Lafayette Street on Munjoy Hill], there [were] probably eight or ten black families...and there [were] maybe a few on Merrill Street, which is the next one over....[W]e used to



Donald Fisher, later president of the Portland Branch NAACP, recalled a "geography of segregation" in Maine during the 1930s and 1940s. Realtors, agents, homeowners, and renters offered housing to African Americans only in the less desirable neighborhoods. Affluent districts were off-limits to blacks. *MHS pamphlet collection.*

say that most of the blacks were either at the East end, which was Munjoy Hill, or the West end down by the railroad station...very few in between. Then on the outskirts and the suburbs, forget about it, none at [all].

Leonard Cummings recalled the same pattern: "These good white folks here [in the finance and real estate businesses] had designated two areas for black people to be in: Munjoy Hill and the West End [the neighborhood near the old Union Station] – there was little in between."[4]

Exclusion of African Americans from certain suburban and affluent neighborhoods, like Cape Elizabeth and Woodford's Corner, also reflected the low average income of the city's blacks, but segregation was primarily achieved through conscious racial discrimination.[5] The reluctance of white landlords to rent to African Americans was one source of discrimination; the real estate industry's refusal to sell certain houses to black Mainers was another. Gerald Talbot's experience in the 1960s was typical. When Talbot inquired about an advertised apartment, the landlord replied that it was available, but when he arrived to inspect the apartment, the landlord told Talbot that the apartment was no longer free: "I'm going to rent [the apartment] to my relatives and I only found that out since we talked on the phone five minutes ago." Other landlords eschewed such excuses; they were explicitly racist. Talbot remembered searching for an apartment with his wife after serving in the army:

> I don't have a lot of the features of a black person and that's because people in America go by visual color....We went looking for rent. I...go knock on the door and it would be fine. Come in and look at the rent. I could feel they were wondering what [race] I was. Finally they popped the question, "What are you?" I said, "I'm a Negro and my family is Negro." Then [the landlord] said, "Well, I can't really rent to you."...My wife got to the point where she just would not go out and look for rent because she couldn't take the rejection.[6]

Discrimination was not restricted to urban areas. Clarence Roberts remembered searching for a place to retire in the rural town of Buxton in the 1940s:

> One place I remember...was a beautiful house, had ten rooms, had four fireplaces in it. Now I felt, "Here's a lovely place to retire." The real estate man left my wife and myself there. He went down the road to find the owner. And they came, just laughing and talking in the car, but the minute [the owner] saw me, he said, "I'm sorry. I can't sell it. My neighbors would object if I sold it to him." The nearest neighbor to that house was five miles down the road![7]

Speaking of the problems in finding decent housing, Gerald Talbot remembered that "most of our opposition came from realtors." The Maine Association of Real Estate Boards, as well as local groups such as the Portland Board of Realtors, "waged a behind-the-scenes war" against the 1965 fair housing bill. The chairman of the state's real estate board, Norman Goslin of Gardiner, doubted that discrimination existed in Maine and opposed the bill because it denied "the right of a property owner to choose his tenants as he sees fit." Summarizing the attitude of Maine's real estate industry, Goslin remarked, "I feel I have a right to turn down a prospective tenant if I don't like the way he parts his hair."[8]

Veiled by the rhetoric of individual rights, realtors discriminated against African Americans. Stephen Halpert, a white activist from Portland, remembered a conversation with a real estate agent who also happened to be a landlord. Recalling that he had previously refused to rent to the Talbots, the landlord volunteered his point of view: "I wouldn't rent it to him and I wouldn't rent it to any [black]...I would rather see my apartment sit empty first." The agent refused to show African Americans similar apartments in Portland because "you just know as a real estate agent, you don't take him around to those places `cause he can't rent there."[9]

The same situation existed in Bangor. Dr. Stanley Evans and his wife were "given the run-around" by a Bangor real estate agency because they were African American. Evans called a Bangor realtor explaining that he would soon be starting a

Substandard housing in Bangor – part of the "geography of segregation" in Maine. Given Bangor's longstanding practice of segregation, cooperation from real estate agencies and agents would depend on significant changes in community attitudes. *Governor's Task Force on Human Rights, Recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Human Rights (1968).*

practice in the area and described the kind of house he and his wife most desired. The agency sent him a list of twenty-five homes and Evans and his wife drove to Bangor one Saturday morning soon after: "When I walked in the door and they saw we were black, I knew it was all over. Suddenly the list of twenty-five houses dwindled to two or three. Owners had suddenly changed their minds, taken ill, or were conveniently out of town." Robert Quinn, coordinator of the Bangor NAACP's housing committee in the late 1960s, worked with the Bangor Realtor's Association to bring some of these barriers down. Given Bangor's strong tradition of segregation, Quinn believed that cooperation from real estate agencies and agents would depend on significant changes in community attitudes. "The realtor's primary fear," Quinn reported, "is not the sale itself, but the effect on future business. If a home is sold to a Negro, the agent's chances for future business from that neighborhood are jeopardized." A real estate agent told Bangor resident Berger Williams, Jr. that "he could not possibly sell me the house [Williams hoped to purchase]. He said he would if it was customary to sell homes in the area to Negroes but he would not be the first one to do so."[10]

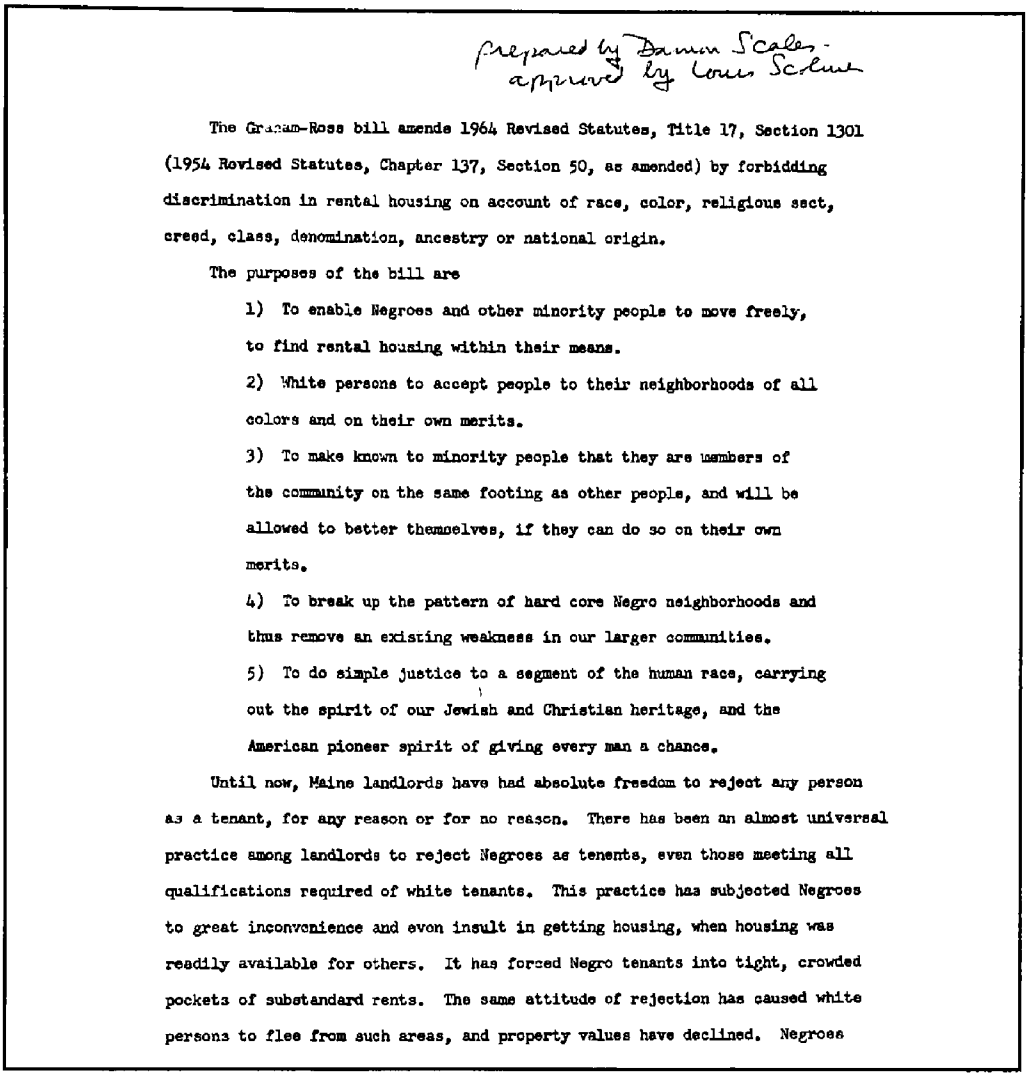
During the late 1940s progressive organizations like the NAACP and Bangor's Penobscot Interracial Forum failed in their efforts to pass broad anti-discrimination legislation, and an early Portland branch NAACP disbanded in the 1950s. After a lull in civil-rights activity in Maine during the 1950s, civil-rights activists began organizing anew.[11] In 1959 the Maine Equal Opportunities Committee, a coalition of educators, business people, politicians, and clergy, successfully sponsored legislation meant to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations. New NAACP chapters were formed in Lewiston in 1960, in Brunswick in 1961, and in Bangor in 1963. These organizations, particularly the Lewiston branch, were especially important in the efforts to pass fair housing legislation in 1963. Named the Central Maine Chapter of the NAACP because it included members from Portland, Augusta, Richmond, and Brunswick, the Lewiston branch was started by

two women: Alberta Jackson, an African-American originally from Philadelphia, and Jean Sampson, a European-American who had experience working with the national NAACP. According to former branch President Elizabeth Jonitus, Jackson was always "testing the limits of race relations" in Maine, and "when she found things that were not the way she thought they ought to be." In 1960 Jackson launched an attack on housing discrimination and contacted Jean Sampson.

> I remember...sitting down talking about organizing a branch. That's how it first started....They [prospective members] just genuinely wanted to be a part of the civil rights movement that was happening nationally....It was really quite easy to get people interested in it. People were naturally quite concerned with what was happening throughout the country. Even though they hadn't been too aware of discrimination in Maine, they quickly became aware of it.[12]

The organization was "pretty much a traditional kind of chapter," Sampson remembered, "most effective in creating public awareness of discrimination that did exist in Maine." Lecturers such as Charles Evers – brother of slain NAACP leader Medgar Evers – and Aaron Henry were invited from Mississippi to speak about the South; the Reverend John C. Bruce from Portland's A.M.E. Zion Church spoke about Maine; and Elizabeth Jonitus gave lectures on race relations in the state.[13]

As a "traditional chapter," the Lewiston branch also made monetary contributions to the national NAACP, but their greatest interest was in solving the problem of housing discrimination in Maine. To help build a consensus across the state, members of the Lewiston NAACP involved themselves in the creation of another chapter in Brunswick in 1961, and went to Bangor in 1963 to encourage a branch there. These branches worked independently but strove for the same goal: fair housing legislation.[14]



prepared by Damon Scales -
approved by Louis Scolnick

The Graham-Ross bill amends 1964 Revised Statutes, Title 17, Section 1301 (1954 Revised Statutes, Chapter 137, Section 50, as amended) by forbidding discrimination in rental housing on account of race, color, religious sect, creed, class, denomination, ancestry or national origin.

The purposes of the bill are

1) To enable Negroes and other minority people to move freely, to find rental housing within their means.

2) White persons to accept people to their neighborhoods of all colors and on their own merits.

3) To make known to minority people that they are members of the community on the same footing as other people, and will be allowed to better themselves, if they can do so on their own merits.

4) To break up the pattern of hard core Negro neighborhoods and thus remove an existing weakness in our larger communities.

5) To do simple justice to a segment of the human race, carrying out the spirit of our Jewish and Christian heritage, and the American pioneer spirit of giving every man a chance.

Until now, Maine landlords have had absolute freedom to reject any person as a tenant, for any reason or for no reason. There has been an almost universal practice among landlords to reject Negroes as tenants, even those meeting all qualifications required of white tenants. This practice has subjected Negroes to great inconvenience and even insult in getting housing, when housing was readily available for others. It has forced Negro tenants into tight, crowded pockets of substandard rents. The same attitude of rejection has caused white persons to flee from such areas, and property values have declined. Negroes

Louis Scolnick and Damon Scales, white attorneys and members of the Lewiston NAACP chapter, drafted legislation that would lead to Maine's landmark 1965 Fair Housing Act. *MHS Vertical Files*

With previous experience working on a discrimination case in Machias, Louis Scolnik and Damon Scales – both white attorneys and members of the Lewiston chapter – used the 1959 anti- discrimination law as a model to draft a fair housing bill in December 1962.[15] The only change made to the earlier bill was a new line in the second paragraph which stipulated that discrimination on the basis of race, creed, class, or national origin in rental housing, in which there were more than two apartments with the owner living

elsewhere, would be prohibited.[16] With the bill drafted, the Lewiston branch contacted Frederick Whittaker, president of the Bangor Theological Seminary and State Senator from Penobscot County, drawing attention to the difficulties in housing: "Our files contain numerous cases of discrimination in Maine. The problem is particularly pressing in Portland and the areas around our military installations. Hardship transfers have been requested by Negroes because of the successive affronts they receive when seeking housing. This is not the image of Maine that we wish to publicize outside the state." Whittaker sponsored the bill, which was sent in February 1963 to the Judiciary Committee. The Lewiston NAACP then sought to build a "statewide committee" to promote the legislation. Organizers contacted the Maine Equal Opportunities Committee, influential in passing the 1959 legislation, and received their pledge of support. The Congressional Christian Conference of Maine and the Conference of Maine Methodist Churches likewise supported the bill. The Ministerial Association of Greater Portland announced in a statement to the press that the 101st Legislature had a "moral and ethical responsibility" to pass fair housing legislation. In addition to building this coalition, Lewiston branch members spoke at public hearings held by the Maine State Advisory Commission to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. The commission's first hearing in Portland that March produced fifty- two pages of oral testimony, which was presented to the legislature as evidence that discrimination in housing was a problem in the state.[17]

Even with this public support, the legislature's Judiciary Committee initially voted seven to three that the legislation "ought not to pass." However, the bill received favorable comment in the House and Senate debates, and at first it seemed that the legislature would pass it. The newspapers in Portland supported the bill, and the Civil Rights Commission, the Judiciary Committee's open meeting, and letters from constituents provided overwhelming evidence of discrimination. Still, the bill's opponents denied the existence of prejudice in Maine: "We have

no racial problem in the State of Maine, and I think we better leave it alone." Another representative echoed this view: "The problem that the people who came before the committee [have] is not a real problem." Most of the debate, however, revolved around the claim that the proposed legislation violated individual property rights. In the end, those who considered property rights paramount forced the postponement of the bill.[18]

In spring 1964, plans to organize a new NAACP branch in Portland began with the urgings of the Reverend Bruce of the A.M.E. Zion Church. Bruce and other members of the Maine Council of Churches canvassed the Portland area for recruits and called an open meeting at Woodford's Congregational Church. Aided by members of the Lewiston branch, a Portsmouth, New Hampshire NAACP chapter, and the New England Regional Conference of the NAACP, Bruce and the Maine Council of Churches were able to get a sufficient turnout to found a chapter. Expressing his enthusiasm, Bruce reported that "although we have more than the 50 persons required as charter members to permit application for a charter, we'd love to have 500 more." Organizing seemed to be proceeding smoothly, but complications arose when the nomination of officers began.[19]

Because of his energy in promoting the new chapter, Bruce was nominated president. But precisely because of Bruce's enthusiasm, former Governor Horace Hildreth objected to his nomination. Hildreth told the gathering that he was sympathetic to the objectives of the NAACP, which he considered the "most restrained and responsible of all organizations headed by Negroes for civil rights." However he feared the direction the civil-rights movement was taking elsewhere: "I [think] that the excesses and fanaticism of the colored people to reach commendable objectives greatly endangers the true cause that we all want to help. I will never approve of breaking laws to achieve an objective." The "excesses and fanaticism" to which Hildreth referred undoubtedly included the marches and demonstrations led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Birmingham, Ala-

bama, a year earlier. The Reverend Bruce, as a member of the Lewiston NAACP and a participant the 1963 March on Washington, was probably deemed radical too. That Bruce publicly praised three Mainers jailed in Florida for anti-segregation agitation also added to his reputation as "excessive" or "fanatic." Several of the clergy – perhaps because of a rift in the church council itself, rather than out of loyalty to Hildreth – backed the former governor's motion to postpone officer elections for several weeks.[20]

Members of Portland's African-American community met several days later to discuss the events of the organizational meeting. Although most agreed that Bruce was doing a "tremendous" job in organizing the Portland NAACP, they were uncomfortable with his domineering style. Harold Richardson, who hosted the meeting, felt "very perturbed to read that we [Portland's black community] have a leader." Bruce, Donald Fisher added, was not the black community's "sole representative." A nominating committee was formed, and the members began their search for possible candidates. The committee asked Gerald Talbot to recommend some possible candidates. To his surprise, he was soon nominated himself.

> I was working a printing press in one of the establishments here and...Rev. Birger Johnson, a minister at Woodsford Congregational Church, came in and said "Gerry, I want to talk to you for a minute. We want to start an NAACP here. But you know about all the blacks in the area. We'd like to have a list of blacks so we can start forming the chapter." I said, "Sure, no problem....I'll do that for you." So...I gave him a list of names that I thought were prominent people....A week later...[Rev. Johnson] came back and said, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Sure. How did you make out with the list?" "Fine, we got a name." I said, "Great! Who is he?" He said, "You!" I almost fell into the press!...I said, "No, no, no, no, no." [But] he finally talked me into giving it a shot...[and] they voted me president.[21]

As Charles Lumpkins has written, Talbot was a logical choice. The committee wanted an African American who would be respected by all to head the Portland chapter, and "as early as 1959 and definitely by 1964 Gerald Talbot had built a solid reputation as a civil-rights activist, one who was not afraid to speak his mind and to tackle difficult issues." Talbot had been involved in the Maine Chapter of the NAACP in the 1950s and with the Lewiston NAACP during the efforts to gain civil-rights legislation in 1963, and he had also attended the 1963 March on Washington with several other Portlanders; but equally important was that he had a likable personality and was a Mainer. Willard Callender remembered, "I voted for Gerry because I saw a remarkable human being....He was a Maine person. As he talked, he talked like a Maine person. Also, there were moments when you saw the remarkable freshness of a leader."[22]

In a secret ballot Talbot was elected with a plurality of forty-one votes, defeating two other candidates nominated from the floor during the meeting.[23] With this election completed, the chapter was able to get a charter from the national NAACP and officially begin their activities; and indeed the Portland NAACP was soon very active. In June, just a month after the branch was organized, Gerald Talbot and treasurer Linwood Young represented it in Washington, D.C. at the annual NAACP convention. National NAACP activists were invited to Portland to give lectures, and businesses and individuals were recruited to support the organization. Unlike many more conservative NAACP branches, it supported the efforts of the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party at that summer's Democratic National Convention by wiring both Maine Senator Edmund Muskie and the Democratic Party's Credentials Committee. But most importantly, the Portland NAACP restarted the local campaign for fair housing legislation.[24]

Working with Portland's newly formed Human Relations Council and other organizations, the Portland NAACP set out to examine problems of discrimination in the city. Over the course of several months the housing committee interviewed almost all of the

African-American families in the city. Like the Maine Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in 1963, the housing survey concluded that discrimination in Portland was a "real, serious, and constant problem...sufficient to affect the housing of the entire Negro community of the area." Most of those interviewed "clearly and emphatically...considered housing to be the most important problem, followed by employment."[25]

Because of this concern, the Portland NAACP focused its efforts on gaining fair housing legislation. "To integrate into the white community," according to Anita Talbot, was the "prime reason for the NAACP." Portland was not alone in its efforts however; the Lewiston and Bangor branches were active in the fight for a fair housing bill. Both chapters took out full-page advertisements in local newspapers to promote fair housing. In Bangor, the Maine Advisory Committee held a second meeting, soliciting testimony from twenty-four African Americans who had encountered severe racial opposition when attempting to rent apartments and houses. Louis Scolnik, a member of the Lewiston NAACP and chairman of the Maine Advisory Committee, spoke for all of Maine's NAACP branches in early 1965 when he explained, "It is practically impossible for [an African American]...to find decent housing....Discrimination in housing is the number one problem faced by a Negro in Maine."[26] Lewiston NAACP member Edward Murrell explained that "of all frustrating problems faced by the northern, urban, nonwhite in his struggle for equal treatment and assimilation into the main stream of American Society, few are as significant as housing."[27]

As in 1962, Louis Scolnik and Damon Scales again drafted a fair housing bill based on the 1959 anti-discrimination legislation. Although Frederick Whittaker no longer represented Bangor, Scolnik was optimistic about finding a sponsor. William H. Williamson observed that "just about every outspoken opponent of the bill in 1963 has either been defeated or has chosen not to run again...[and] some of the most outspoken supporters of the bill are now in positions of high legislative influence." The NAACP sponsored legisla-

Since housing discrimination was subtle – and to some, invisible – civil-rights leaders went to great lengths to document the scope of discrimination in Maine. Above, (left to right) Willard Callender, Jr., Gwendolyn Blanchard, and the Reverend Clarence Tyson discuss Callender's 1965 survey of the housing situation for Portland African-Americans. *Courtesy of the African-American Archive of Maine, University of Southern Maine Library.*

tion and, as was predicted, quickly found legislative sponsors. On February 2, 1965, Freeport's David Graham and Bath's Rodney Ross placed "An Act Relating to Discrimination in Housing" on the Judiciary Committee's agenda.[28]

Between the bill's assignment in February and the committee's vote in May, the NAACP rallied support for the legislation. Individual members of each of the branches met, phoned, and wrote to members of the legislature in order to provide evidence of discrimination. Information compiled by the NAACP branches – particularly the housing survey results – was submitted as well. Anticipating arguments from the 1963 debate, Scolnik and Scales, the authors of the bill, explained the ramifications of fair housing legislation: "[The bill] does *not*

deprive the lessor the right to refuse to rent an apartment to an applicant based on alcoholism, size of family, poor financial risk, or other reasonable grounds. It prohibits the refusal to rent an apartment based *solely* on a prejudice because of race, religion, class or national origin."[29]

The Maine Association of Realty Boards and the Portland Board of Realtors publicly opposed the bill. The former appeared at the Judiciary Committee's public hearing pleading that the bill "represented an infringement upon `property rights,' the `right of private contract,' and `freedom of control.'" Although association members conceded that the bill would probably pass, they nevertheless campaigned to make the final approval a matter of referendum, and continued a letter campaign to members of the legislature. Nevertheless, the bill enjoyed strong support in the legislature and both Elmer Violette of Van Buren, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and House Speaker Dana Childs resisted the realtor's tactics.[30]

The Judiciary Committee reported that the bill "ought to pass" on May 6 by a majority of nine to one, and a week later debate began in the house. First to speak was Robert Ross of Brownville. Attempting to set the tone for debate on individual property rights, Ross kept his message short, "I don't call this an antidiscrimination rental housing bill. I call it a forced housing bill." Rodney Ross of Bath, co-sponsor of the bill, challenged the opposition as "not based as much on logic as...on platitudes and implications." Opponents raised the standard assertions that "we can't legislate morality," that fair housing violated personal property rights, and that Maine needed no such legislation "because there are so few Negroes." Thomas Gillan said the bill represented "a complete new role in the concept of state and control over private property of its citizens," and Jasper Lycette cautioned that the bill would "make criminals out of everyone," allowing the "zealots [to] hang you like they did the so-called witches of Salem." Generally, however, support of for the legislation was confident and strong, and passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 legitimized the Maine legislation. The bill passed both the House and Senate.[31]

Maine's civil-rights leaders stand by as Governor John H. Reed signs the 1965 Fair Housing Bill. Left to right behind the Governor: Glen Payne of Bangor, Representative David Graham of Freeport, Gerald Talbot of Portland, Robert E. Talbot of Bangor, Representative Rodney Ross, Louis Scolnick of Lewiston, and William Burney of Augusta. *Courtesy of the African-American Archive of Maine, University of Southern Maine Library.*

When Governor John Reed signed the Fair Housing Bill into law in May 1965, he was joined by the bill's co-sponsors, David Graham and Rodney Ross. But also present were representatives of the Bangor, Lewiston, and Portland branches of the NAACP. The presence of Gerald Talbot, Glenn Payne, Robert Talbot, Louis Scolnik, and William Burney at the signing symbolized a triumph for Maine's civil-rights movement. Though a tiny minority in the state, Maine's African Americans joined with white Mainers to challenge racial discrimination in housing. Active within the community as organizers and promoters of civil rights, the Maine NAACP led the state's civil-rights movement to this victory.[32]

NOTES

[1]*Bangor Daily News*, February 7, 1966.

[2]Gerald Talbot, quoted in Shoshana Hoose, *Anchor of the Soul* (videocassette, 1994). The NAACP's origins in the state date back to the 1920s with a branch in Bangor. By the late 1940s the organization had a chapter in Portland.

[3]Donald Fisher, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 22, 1990, transcript, Northeast Folklife Center (hereafter NFC), University of Maine; Sterling Dymond, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 10, 1990, NFC. For Bangor, see Ed Matheson, "Negroes Cite Discrimination in Bangor," *Bangor Daily News*, April 28, 1964.

[4]Willard Callender, Jr., interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 21, 1990, NFC; Fisher quote from Charles Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism in Maine from the 1940s to 1971: Black Mainers, Black and White Activists, and the Resistance Against Racism," M.A. thesis, University of Maine, 1992, pp. 56-57; Leonard Cummings, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 28, 1990, NFC.

[5]In 1949, eighty percent of African-American Mainers were employed as semiskilled labor; fully three-quarters of black Mainers' earnings totals were in the lowest income bracket. See *Census of the Population: 1950. Volume II. Characteristics of the Population. Part 19. Maine* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952), pp. 107-109, 126.

[6]Gerald Talbot, interview by the author, tape recording, Portland, September 2, 1995; Gerald Talbot, interview by Charles Lumpkins, October 27, 1990, NFC.

[7]Clarence Roberts, quoted in Roger Champagne, "I Don't Feel Color," *Salt* (Winter 1982): 55-56.

[8]Hoose, *Anchor of the Soul*; William H. Williamson, "Maine's Realtors Oppose Fair Housing Bill," *Portland Evening Express*, March 17, 1965.

[9]Stephen Halpert, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 3, 1990, NFC.

[10]Dan Everett, "What's Bangor Doing About the Urban Crisis?" *Maine Times*, May 23, 1969; *Report on Maine: Denial of Equal Opportunity in Rental Housing and its Effects on Negroes in Portland and Bangor, Maine* (Augusta: Maine State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1965), p. 13.

[11]See Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism," pp. 66-73; Eben Miller, "Resistance in a Northern State: African-American Protest History in Maine, 1663-1996," B.A. thesis, Bates College, 1996, pp. 79-90.

[12]Peter Jonitus, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 9, 1990, NFC; Elizabeth Jonitus, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 9, 1990, NFC; Jean Sampson, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 29, 1990, NFC.

[13]Jean Sampson interview; Mildred Myrham and Elizabeth Jonitus, "Local Negroes, and Friends of Negroes Have Made Real History," *Lewiston Sunday Magazine*, January 3, 1963.

[14]Peter Jonitus interview; *Brunswick Record*, November 16, 1961; *Bangor Daily News*, February 3, 1964.

[15]Elizabeth Jonitus interview.

[16]The exemption for apartment buildings with less than two units was an attempt to appease those concerned about individual property rights.

[17]*Legislative Record of the One Hundred and First Legislature of the State of Maine* (Augusta: State Printing Office, 1964), pp. 2412, 2735; Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism," p. 119; *Portland Press Herald*, April 6, 1963; *Report on Maine*; James C. Sounders, Jr., "Racial Discrimination Cited in Housing Here," *Portland Press Herald*, March 26, 1963.

[18]*Legislative Record of the One Hundred and First Legislature*, p. 905.

[19]*Maine Sunday Telegram*, April 5, 1964.

[20]Ronald H. Knight, "Obstructionism Charged in Forming NAACP Here," *Portland Press Herald*, April 22, 1964. Lumpkins asserts that Bruce lost the nomination because of tension among the clergy. According to Bowdoin Professor Randolph Stakeman, Bruce's status as an "outsider" may have been as important to black community members, who had been, as a rule, Yankees for generations. Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism," pp. 81-83; Randolph Stakeman to the author, March 29, 1996.

[21]Callender interview; James C. Saunders, Jr., "Negroes Urge `Integrated' Rights Drive Here," *Portland Press Herald*, April 27, 1964; Roy A. Whitcomb, Jr., "Two-Way Contest Develops for President of NAACP," *Portland Evening Express*, May 11, 1964; Talbot interview by Charles Lumpkins.

[22]Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism," p. 86; Talbot interview by the author; Callender interview.

[23]James C. Saunders, Jr. "Gerald Talbot Elected President as NAACP Unit Organizes Here," *Portland Press Herald*, May 12, 1964; Gerald E. Talbot, Carol J. Jones, and George Shepard, *Portland Branch NAACP: Twenty Years, 1964-1984*, 1st souvenir edition (Portland: Portland Branch NAACP, 1985), p. 5.

[24]May Craig, "Mainers Attend NAACP Parley in Washington," *Portland Press Herald*, June 23, 1964; Saunders, "Talbot Elected President"; *Portland Press Herald*, June 20, August 19, October 9, 1964; *Portland Evening Express*, June 10, August 11, 31, September 23, 1964.

[25]*Portland Evening Express*, February 1, 1965; Ronald H. Knight, "Housing Bias Real Poser to Negroes in Portland," *Portland Press Herald*, February 17, 1965.

[26]Anita Talbot, interview by Charles Lumpkins, November 28, 1990, NFC; *Bangor Daily News*, February 12, 1965; *Lewiston Daily Sun*, February 12, 1965; *Portland Press Herald*, February 22, 1965; *Report on Maine*; Matheson, "Negroes Cite Discrimination in Bangor"; William H. Williamson, "102nd Legislature May Revive Rent Discrimination Bill," *Portland Press Herald*, January 3, 1965.

[27]*Portland Press Herald*, February 22, 1965.

[28]Ibid; Williamson, "102nd Legislature May Revive Rent Discrimination Bill"; *Legislative Record of the One Hundred and Second Legislature* (Augusta: State Printing Office, 1966), p. 211.

[29]Gerald Talbot interview by the author; Lumpkins, "Civil Rights Activism," p. 134; *Portland Press Herald*, March 15, 1965. Italics added.

[30]William H. Williamson, "Maine Realtors Oppose Fair Housing Bill," *Portland Press Herald*, March 17, 1965; *Portland Press Herald*, March 27, 1965; Roy A. Whitcomb, Jr., "Opposition Virtually Admits Defeat on Fair Housing," ibid., March 28, 1965; *Portland Evening Express*, April 3, 1965.

[31]*Legislative Record of the One Hundred and Second Legislature*, pp. 1835, 2099, 2100-2103. For the vote on the bill, see ibid., p. 2487.

[32]A photograph of the bill signing is in Talbot, Jones, and Shepard, *Portland NAACP*, p. 8.